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## THE MUSICAL TIMES, And Singing Class Circular.

With which is incorporated "THE MUSICAL REVIEW."

NOVEMBER 1st, 1852.

### MOZART'S MASSES.

No. II.

Contributed by E. HOLMES.

IN November, 1776, in the twentieth year of Mozart's life, the Mass No. 11 was produced, and therefore, according to the numbering of the Composer's works observed in Novello's edition of the Masses, it presents a musical illustration of its author at least three years in advance of the first Mass. This work was also composed at Salzburg, and probably, from its cheerful and magnificent style, in anticipation of the Christmas festival. The instrumental score as published by Breitkopf, of Leipsic, exhibits only two violins, two oboes, trumpets, drums, basses, and organ; but in the original score possessed by André, a part for the viola is named, which does not appear in the Leipsic publication; and what is curious in the construction of the work, it seems scarcely to be missed. André's manuscript also contains indications of places in Mozart's handwriting, in which three trombones may also be used. The Composer, who knew what a grand effect the voice parts of this Mass would produce when well filled, made provision for an additional weight of instrumentation on certain occasions when it might be found desirable; but that the orchestra in which the Mass was first performed was a very peculiar one, is manifest not only from the want of tenor instruments, violas, bassoons, &c., but also from the first and second violins in the stronger parts of the chorus being continually written in unison, as if the Salzburg violin players might, without this doubling of the unison, have some difficulty in making themselves heard. What careful thought and consideration of effect the master employed in every step of his labour, is apparent from the most youthful records of his composition. Even at the present period of modern art, when the brilliancy of the orchestra has perhaps attained its highest perfection, we still admire, in the overtures of Weber and others of his school, the powerful effect which is produced when the first and second violins are united, and play in unison. Some of the most startling passages heard at the Philharmonic, originate in this concentration of power.

Mozart was at this time, 1776, still a famous violin player. He had a beautiful tone, that flowed as smoothly as oil. One of the numerous concertos which he composed during this very productive year, was performed to the great delight of the Philharmonic audience, by M. Sainton,

only a season or two ago. This fact alone is a sufficient proof of the lively interest which his unknown works of this period may still create. He had fully matured by this time his rapid mechanism of composition, and displayed resources in every variety of the styles of music. With this fertility of mind his executive powers kept pace; and while we picture to ourselves a young man whose music pen was in constant requisition, we are to remember him also as solo-playing organist, pianist, violinist,—the star of the concerts of the Salzburg court—and presenting, in the capacity of composer and performer, such a combination as the musical public had never contemplated before.

In the autumn of 1776, a number of Italian opera singers visited Salzburg, and Mozart, who the year before had been exercising himself on a grave mythological subject in company with old Hasse at Milan, now diverted his pen into the Italian comic vein, and composed several of those chattering buffo-songs—a syllable to a note—which are still irresistible when delivered by a voluble singer. He was trying everything in this first ardour of life, and hope and expectation gave wings to his genius. In looking through the greater part of the compositions which bear upon this date, we have the mortification to find that we have never heard them, and most probably never shall hear them. These works are still in progress, and will yet see the light; we unfortunately live too near the time of this transcendent genius, to be able to overlook all that he performed.\*

The Kyrie of the Mass No. 2, in C, though the opening ten bars, *Andante maestoso*, are of striking originality in the rythmical construction, scarcely rises above the composer's most ordinary and current style. In the Salzburg masses, this part of the service seems usually to have been made as short as possible. A few bars with repetitions, to render the music coherent and intelligible, and the Kyrie is finished; the time to develop a design being denied. Every musician knows how difficult it is, under these limitations, to create any impression. Yet even here the parts for the solo voices are uncommonly attractive. The alto, tenor, and bass, accompanying the soprano solo at 'Christe eleison,' rest upon the ear in their beautiful and harmonious dispersions, as effects of vocal beauty that cannot be surpassed.

\* It is strange that in a city so abounding in the admirers of Mozart as London, we have never yet heard *Idomeneo*,—a work admitted by all to be unique as a specimen of the tragic genius of the Master. It was once performed at a concert given by Mr. T. Severn, but that is all. From time to time we get the hearing of a new Symphony; but would it not be worth the while of our great Concert directors to obtain the new scores made by Mozart of his Symphony in G minor, and of his Symphony in D (without the introductory *Adagio*)? In the new score of the former, he has altered the two oboe parts, in order to make room for two clarionets. To the Symphony in D, he added parts for flutes and clarionets. We ought surely in London to possess these amended and enlarged scores. They were evidently meant by the Composer to meet demands which the progress of music would naturally create.

The Gloria, *Allegro assai*,  $\frac{4}{4}$ , is one of the most spirited of the Composer's productions; it has the finest traces of his peculiar style, and is the model of an effective chorus. Not only do we here admire the fine declamation and expression of the words, but the choral harmonies are embellished with a multitude of the most elegant florid passages for the violins. See, for example, the manner in which the Composer proceeds at the words 'Laudamus te.' This spirited and effective manner of accompanying a chorus, was in the year 1776 a discovery in music. The alternate solos for bass, alto, and tenor, answered by the quartett each time with a new cadence, is in Mozart's most matured style. A new orchestral feature is introduced at the *Tutti* Qui Tollis; and a series of fine progressions and modulations brings back the original subject at 'Quoniam.' The pedal point at 'Cum Sancto Spiritu,' is short, but, with the florid accompaniment, extremely effective and beautiful. As the violins are mostly in unison, quite a new idea of this composition is obtained when even one good strong player is joined to a quartett of voices at the pianoforte. Mozart had evidently here to dispatch the text as quickly as possible; but he did not forget to make the design of a little choral symphony in this Gloria, and to shew himself throughout in his most genial humour.

The Credo, *Allegro molto*,  $\frac{3}{4}$ , always pleases by its attractive melody. It breaks into two main divisions, of which the first announces what is fully developed in the second. An interrupted cadence on the dominant of A minor, introduces the quartett 'Et incarnatus,' *Adagietto*,  $\frac{4}{4}$ , in which the sweetness of solo voices, and the choral magnificence of the *tutti*, are contrasted with unexampled effect. The chorus enters in C major, with a chromatic descent in the treble, of which the accompanying harmonies are indicated by the subjoined figures, while the whole passage is rendered impressive by bold contrasts of *forte* and *piano*:—



To this new experiment of the day in choral effect, succeeds a short pathetic passage for soprano and alto, 'Etiam pro nobis,' and then a fugued *tutti* led by the trebles, 'Sub Pontio Pilato,' in C minor, beginning on the high G, so magnificent and grand, that at the distance of many years the remembrance of our pleasure in hearing it fills us with a lively emotion. The waiting on the C in the tenor before the bass point enters, is one of the most satisfactory things that ever delighted a fugal ear. All here is symmetry and construction, joined with poetry and a profound insight into effective contrasts. The

octaves of the soprano and alto at 'Homo factus est,' shew that the stiffness of old rule was already relaxed by Mozart in favour of expression and effect. There is also especially to admire in this *Adagietto*, that distinctness in the scoring, that separation of the phrases of voices and instruments, of wind and string, each part distinct yet symmetrical with itself and with the whole, of which the Composer continued to leave us the best models: examples of the clearness which should pervade every true musical conception.

At the 'Et resurrexit' the first subject of the Credo is resumed, but is carried on with higher interest, as the canonical passage between the basses and tenors at 'Et in Spiritum' shows. I remember it being very justly observed many years since by Mr. Novello, as a characteristic of Mozart, that he never repeats a passage in exactly the same manner. He reserved to himself the privilege of altering it, and of heightening its effect by displaying it in a new aspect. Mozart thought of the hearer as well as of himself, and knew that a composition had no true existence till it was thoroughly enjoyed. His object in every work was to enhance pleasure by constant degrees. Throughout this Credo there is one marked and prominent melody, but the Composer's manner of subdividing it for the violins, which sometimes separate and sometimes go together, his method of accompanying the chorus with oboes often with holding notes, and not doubling the voice parts, and even the simple trumpet notes, are full of considerations for the musician.

The Sanctus has a character of elevation and grandeur, which would discredit no period of the Composer's career. Its theme appears in several works of Mozart, as well as in a well-known fugue of Bach; here, however, the energy of the orchestral features impart to it a character of unwonted dignity. Amidst the solemn procession of the voices worthy of the time-hallowed cloister, whose true language the Sanctus expresses, we gladly pause to remark the extreme beauty of the *sotto voce* passages of the choir. This manner of introducing a seventh in the tenor, directly against a sixth and fourth, must have been a musical heresy in 1776; nevertheless the phrase is still fresh and beautiful:—



The expression of choral sublimity in the following passage has rarely if ever been excelled:—

Ple-ni sunt Cœ-li, Cœ-li et ter - ra.

Ple-ni sunt Cœ-li, Cœ-li et ter - ra.

Violins & Basses unis. *fz* *hr* *fz*

A modern character, and one peculiar to Mozart, is here imparted through the energy of the syncopated phrase of accompaniment, redoubled by all the stringed instruments in unison. The Hosanna, a cheerful and beautiful declamation of the words, shows the art of constructing a clear chorus out of voice parts abounding in the quickest imitations. The Benedictus, in F, is a vocal quartett, not inferior in the tenderness and elegance of its style to the Benedictus in the Requiem. One or two passages of the soprano solo savour a little of the melodies of the old school; but the passages of combination have an elegance and repose of style, that time cannot injure, nor could any pen but Mozart's have produced them. There is no doubt, but that great and majestic composer as Mozart was, the setting of the Benedictus was throughout the whole Mass his peculiar province. He understood its sentiment, and could express its angelical language. Other composers acquitted themselves with credit in other parts of the Mass, but in the Benedictus Mozart's faculty was as peculiar as in certain departments of the lyric drama, where, in expressing affections and sentiments, no one has ever approached him. The Benedictus of No. 2 is especially to be commended to the notice of all young musicians and part-singers.

The Agnus Dei is a striking movement, both in respect of melody and modulation, and abounds in deceptive changes of harmony, in which flats seem to mean sharps—and the ear is agreeably deceived. The subject which appears in the Dona nobis in quick notes, is here first introduced in slow, and thus the whole design is linked in and connected. The Dona nobis (in conformity with Salzburg usage and the Archbishop's taste) forms a rattling and lively chorus, more melodious and effective than devotional; and though not equal as music to some of the preceding parts of the Mass, extremely pleasant to hear.

A peculiar emanation of Mozart *himself* is the Mass No. 2, and in this view it chiefly interests, for he has composed more elaborate and scientific Masses. The effect it was calculated to produce on the actual state of music may be imagined, and yet it lay nearly half a century in obscurity!

William Russell, formerly Organist of the Foundling, possessed the first full score of a Mass

by Mozart; it was No. 1. That he was a devoted admirer and a clever imitator of this new style, may be seen in a soprano solo published by Novello in one of the early books of his 'Motetts for the Offertory.' Mozart was not only musical himself, but pre-eminently the cause of music in other people. The harmonics of his genius were prolonged in distant nations, and they still vibrate in kindred souls. When the publication of Mozart's Masses was resolved upon, the Rev. C. J. Latrobe, that worthy friend of musical progress, afforded the most efficient assistance; and from this time, about the year 1820, the taste for classical music began to spread in England.

But we have not yet heard these works as Mozart intended them. Mr. Novello, seeing how complete the voice parts were, made his arrangement chiefly from these parts, serving thereby two judicious objects—helping the singers, and omitting that which, without a very peculiar and unusual management of the organ, would be better omitted. In his selection of the plainer accompaniment he was certainly right. But in the course of thirty years, it is natural that we should have the taste improved and the desires enlarged; and it is certain that in such compositions as the Mass Nos. 1 and 2, the orchestra is half the battle. We could propose to ourselves no greater musical treat than to hear either of them, with about forty vibrating voices, in a suitable room, with four first and four second violins, two violoncellos, two basses, oboes, trumpets, drums, and organ.

If due proportions are observed, we gain the magnificence of a fine composition even better with a moderate than with an immense number of performers.

*To be continued.*

#### ORGANISTS.—THEIR DUTIES AND REMUNERATION.

No class of qualified musicians is so badly paid as organists: yet none can have higher claims to the consideration of those by whom organists are employed. The qualifications necessary to be possessed by an organist, independently of his professional knowledge and skill, are manifold, and the due performance of his highly responsible trust requires more than that presented by a mere mechanical acquisition of the routine of the Church Service. The effect of the reduction which the salaries of competent organists are of late undergoing, will be, that our churches, in one of the most important parts of public worship, will be brought to the level of the meeting-house. The injunction "Sing ye praises with understanding" will be totally lost sight of, and that which, from its dignity and grandeur of performance, give the heart and mind as well as the voice, a share in the acts of devotion, will descend to the slovenly and ill-conducted "psalm-singing" of the conventicle.

Independently of his professional adaptability to the office, an organist should be a gentleman in manners no less than a scholar: he should have the heart to feel and the capacity to understand the beauties of the service of which he is called upon to take so prominent and important a part: it is not the mere accompaniment of the